

# THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

## STAFFING COMMITTEE

21/10 A meeting of the Staffing Committee was held on Wednesday 16 June 2021 at 2.00 pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Dr R J Messer (Chair)

Mr J J Brady

Professor C Harty

Dr K Henderson

Mr S Hunt

Dr A Laville

Professor H Parish

Mrs C Rolstone

Mrs J Rowe

Mrs S Thornton

Mr A J Twyford (Secretary)

Apologies were received from Prof for their contributions to the Committee.

21/11 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2021 v

Arising from the minutes:

Minute 21/04 ( 20/13): Staff Wellbeing

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Talent and People) informed the Committee that five “Mental Health Skills for Managers” workshops were held in March and May 2021 following the decision of the UEB to approve funding for mental health awareness workshops. She confirmed that over 80 Line Managers benefited from these workshops run by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).

She informed the Committee that given the high demand by leaders and managers for the training in mental health skills, a paper will shortly be taken to the UEB asking for additional funds to run three further workshops.

She indicated that the planned mental health awareness training for the UEB and leadership Group has not yet been scheduled, and the UEB will be asked to identify their preferred training method.

The University Secretary suggested that thought should be given as to how the effectiveness of this training is determined. It was also pointed out that staff wellbeing is a regular item discussed at the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee, including updates on staff take up of the Wellbeing Peer Support network.

It was agreed that the topic of staff wellbeing should be included at a future meeting.

Minute 21/06: Joint Working Group – review of workloads

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (Advisory Services) provided the Committee with an update on the work undertaken by the working group, established to consider workloads across all staff groups. She acknowledged that given the UCU's wish to discuss "broader" issues including the marketisation of the higher education sector, and the best use of tuition fees, overall progress had been slow.

To date a series of surveys and drop-in sessions had been convened including those run by the Staff Forum, the UCU, and the University. Work was now underway to conduct a series of facilitated focus groups. Colleagues were in the process of analysing the data collected via the University survey.

She confirmed that the intention was for the working group to provide the UEB with an interim report no later than the end of the 2020-21 academic year but acknowledged that meeting the original timescale would be a challenge.

#### 21/12 Managing staff in a flexible/remote environment

The views of the Committee were sought on the long term challenges arising for those with line management responsibilities in managing staff in a flexible environment.

The Director of Human Resources stated that the current working arrangements as a result of the pandemic have been borne out of necessity, and include



next academic session but indicated it wouldn't be completely finalised until the Ways of Working project had concluded.

#### 21/13 Staff Surveys – personal data questions

The Assistant Director of Human Resources (People and Talent) sought the views of the Committee on the proposed questions going forward for future staff surveys in respect of sex and gender identity.

The accompanying paper had proposed the following options for the Committee to consider and agree.

#### Sex/ gender

In order to ask a question about sex/ gender as a protected characteristic, we could either ask:

- 'What is your sex?' with response options Female, Male, Other, in line with HESA and Advance HE (and the 2021 census though that did not include Other). We may want to consider a free text box for 'Other', or
- 'What best describes your gender?'



The Committee thanked the Director of Technical Services for the update.

21/15 Working remotely overseas



21/17 Provisional dates of meetings for the 202 1/22 Academic Session:

|                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Thursday 7 October 2021  | 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm             |
| Tuesday 23 November 2021 | 10.00 am to 12.00 pm (reserve) |
| Tuesday 8 February 2022  | 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm             |
| Wednesday 27 April 2022  | 11.00 am to 1.00 pm (reserve)  |
| Wednesday 15 June 2022   | 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm             |